

## **Leadership Council update, July 2024**

The Leadership Council met jointly on July 18 with the leadership/general councils of the Presbyteries of Prospect Hill and North Central Iowa, as part of the ongoing assessment of our shared staffing model. We are working to discern how the presbytery can best support the congregations and communities of south-central Iowa. Soon, we will share a survey with ruling and teaching elders in order to be sure the Leadership Council understands our congregations' needs and possibilities.

As you know, this mid-course assessment process began in April. All three presbytery councils agree that there are strengths to the shared staffing model. In this arrangement, the three presbyteries jointly called three executive presbyters and hired office and communications coordinators. It is a real gift to have such specialized staff roles, and the individuals serving the presbyteries are fantastic. At the same time, we have recognized that staffing by itself can't address the numerical decline facing our churches.

We are also assessing the overall feasibility of the shared staffing model. Membership and giving have fallen faster than projected in all three presbyteries. While we have financial reserves, the current staffing model is not sustainable based on the presbyteries' current operating income. Our Budget and Finance Committee is working with the Living Legacy Fund Committee to address part of this structural shortfall, but more will need to be done.

The Leadership Council wants to make sure that our decisions focus on the purpose of a presbytery, which is to govern and equip congregations and teaching elders. To serve this purpose, we need to be clear about what churches need from beyond themselves. The Presbytery is able to provide certain resources, to support relationships between congregations, and to embody the accountability we provide to each other as siblings in Christ. Some of these purposes clearly depend on professional staff, and some may be better served in other ways.

As part of the Leadership Council's discernment about the presbytery's purposes and needs, we are planning to conduct a survey of congregational leaders. This survey was developed by the Presbytery of Prospect Hill, where it provided great insight about the well-being and needs of their congregations. We're sure it will teach us much about Des Moines Presbytery's churches as well.

We will want to hear from pastors, clerks, session members, and other leaders throughout every congregation. We need to make a few minor adjustments so the survey fits our context, and you can look for it in early August. In the meantime, please reach out to any member of the Leadership Council with questions or concerns. Always, continue to pray for God's mission among and through the congregations in Des Moines Presbytery, and pray that we may all discern the Spirit's call on the church in this part of Christ's body.

In Christ's peace,  
TE Nathan Williams